

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

(NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING)

Present: Councillor J.E. Williams (Chair)

Councillors: D.J.R. Bartlett (Vice-Chair), C.A. Campbell, J.M. Charles, I.W. Davies, W.K. Davies, J.D. James, P.E.M. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, D.W.H. Richards, T. Theophilus.

Councillor J.S. Williams – Substitute for Councillor P. Hughes-Griffiths

Mrs. V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

Also in attendance:

Councillor G.O. Jones – Executive Board Member (EBM) for Education & Children

Also in attendance as an observer:

Councillor J. Williams

The following officers were in attendance:

Mr. G. Morgans – Chief Education Officer
Mrs. B. O'Connor – Managing Director of ERW
Mr. A. Rees – Head of Learner Programmes
Mr. S. Smith – Head of Children's Services
Mr. S. Davies – School Modernisation Manager
Mr. M. Morden – Lifelong Learning Networks Manager
Mr. P. Davies – Capital Accountant
Ms. S. Nolan – Group Accountant
Ms. B. Dolan – Senior Consultant
Mr. M. Hughes – Assistant Consultant

Venue: Spilman Street Chamber, Carmarthen (10:00am – 12:30pm)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors W.G. Hopkins and P. Hughes-Griffiths.

Apologies were also received from Mr. S. Pearson (Parent Governor Co-opted Member) and Mr. R. Sully (Director of Education & Children)

The Chair welcomed Councillors M.J.A. Lewis and K. Davies to their first meeting as new members of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor D.J.R. Bartlett	Item 4	In that he is President of Carmarthenshire NUT

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. ERW BUSINESS PLAN 2015/16 AND REVIEW OF 2014/15

Councillor D.J.R. Bartlett declared an interest in that he is President of Carmarthenshire NUT

The Chair welcomed Betsan O'Connor, Managing Director (MD) of the Education through Regional Working (ERW) Consortium, to the meeting.

The Committee received a presentation in relation to the work of the ERW Consortium during 2014/15 and its business plan for the years ahead. The presentation outlined ERW's functions, the continuation of the statutory responsibilities within each local authority as well as the collaborative working across the region.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

The gap in attainment by pupils eligible (e) for and receiving free school meals (e-FSM) was referred to and it was asked what was being done to reduce this. The MD ERW advised that there was a regional strategy however within Carmarthenshire there were supportive services beyond education such as the Team around the Family approach. Tracking of every pupil was also important so that Headteachers could provide additional and appropriate support. This however had to be done sensitively and within the context of the individual school. ERW had also identified professional learning schools and was funding them to share their expertise. The Pupil Deprivation Grant was not having the impact expected and WG with Estyn were looking at this. ERW intended monitoring and auditing the use made of the PDG by schools and its impact going forward.

A question was asked about families who did not take up their FSM entitlement and how their children were supported. The MD ERW re-iterated the need to track all pupils using flight-path principles to plan the support they needed. The Head of Learner Programmes agreed there was excellent support from ERW across the county and at a school level. It was important to have strategies to move all pupils on but also to work with individuals on a one to one basis as needed. Children from middle class backgrounds had support at home, were imbued with ambition by interested parents as well as having additional tuition if necessary. Young people could fall below the radar due to poverty and disadvantage. The new curriculum provided opportunities to enhance and enrich the lives of young people and children within education by interweaving education and well being.

It was asked why new Challenge Advisors (CA) were being recruited. The MD ERW stated that it was intended to create a transient workforce with a third fulltime, a third secondees and a third on a consultant basis. This would ensure that the workforce skills were recent and relevant. It was however difficult as head teacher

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

salaries were greater and the CA role required the ability to challenge. Schools could also be reluctant to release a lead teacher in case there was an adverse impact on the school. The CAs also required regular training to ensure the quality of their work remained high and consistent.

It was asked what schools thought of ERW. The MD ERW advised that it was important to look at outcomes however teachers and head teachers were happy with the direction of travel. It was also a transition for them to take leadership roles and for all schools to become self-improving.

A question was asked about which schools had been identified to undertake the PISA tests. The MD ERW stated that a private company had chosen the sample at random. She believed that the information was confidential but would, if allowed, circulate the detail.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

The Committee unanimously resolved to adjourn the meeting for 5 minutes.

5. **CARMARTHENSHIRE ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE – PROGRESS REPORT – ACL SERVICE PROVISION 2015-16**

The Committee considered a progress report in relation to the Carmarthenshire Adult & Community Learning (ACL) Service. It was reminded that at its meeting on the 11th of March 2015, members had requested such a report, which would include options for the provision of ACL in 2015/16. The report outlined implications of recent Welsh Government funding cuts on the service and the proposed transfer of the provision to Coleg Sir Gâr, as well as options for delivering the service during 2015/16.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

Concerns were expressed at the news that the TAD construction centre in Llanelli would be closing when its lease ended. The Lifelong Learning Networks Manager clarified that the 14 – 19 related work with Coleg Sir Gâr providing construction vocational courses would progress into the vocational village at Bryngwyn School site. Adult learner courses would however cease at the TAD centre from July 2015. He emphasised that the vocational village would be used by all of Llanelli and beyond, making the School truly community focused. The School Modernisation Manager advised that the project utilising £600k of WG capital grant was due for completion in February 2016.

It was asked how the new programme would be publicised. The Lifelong Learning Networks Manager advised that the service has stopped sending brochures to all households 3 years ago as only 1% of the population were accessing the courses. The programme would however be promoted at all public information points, through Carmarthenshire News as well as the corporate website.

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

Express was concerned that the Felinfoel Community Education Centre would go to waste given there were no alternative plans to run the facility. The Lifelong Learning Networks Manager highlighted that in the three public consultation meetings held in June 2015, Community Education Centre users expressed their view that they valued these facilities and requested that the County Council continue to run these buildings. He emphasised however that the ACL Service and Department for Education and Children would not have sufficient funding to continue to run these buildings in the 2016-2017 financial year and that additional funding from outside the Department would be required if these sites are to remain open in the future.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

5.1 The report be endorsed.

5.2 The Executive Board be asked to consider the possibility of finding funding to maintain the Community Education Centres going forward.

6. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME – PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE LANGUAGE CATEGORY OF YSGOL BRO MYRDDIN FROM BILINGUAL (2A) TO WELSH-MEDIUM (WM)

The Committee received a report outlining a proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin. The Committee was informed that the Education & Children Department fully supported the school's desire to continue along the Welsh language continuum and to change the language category to Welsh Medium (WM). Members were informed that informal consultation with pupils, governors, staff and parents of existing and prospective pupils had recently been completed. However, under the 2014 School Organisation Statutory Code a regulated alteration such as a change in the language category of a school required a proposal to be published to formalise arrangements. The Authority was therefore required to complete a statutory consultation process which, if approved, would commence in the Autumn Term 2015. The Committee welcomed the report and the proposal.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was asked what the timescale for the consultation would be. The School Modernisation Manager advised that this would be between the 19th of October and the 14th of December providing the proposal was approved by Council on the 14th of October.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the proposal to proceed with the statutory consultation process regarding the planned change in the language category of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin.

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

7. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – 1ST APRIL 2014 TO 31ST MARCH 2015

The Committee received, for consideration, the End of Year Performance Management Report for the services within its remit, for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015. The report included:

- A. Heads of Service Overview of Performance
- B. Improvement Plan Monitoring – Actions and Performance Measures
- C. Additional Provisional Performance Measures Data
- D. Complaints and Compliments Monitoring

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

Clarification was requested in relation to the reference to a possible review of catchment area for one secondary school in report A. The Chief Education Officer stated that he would circulate the detail following the meeting. In response to an additional question, he advised that a comprehensive review of catchment areas was resource intensive and that it would be extremely challenging to find the capacity within the department to repeat the exercise that was carried out in 2011/12.

References were made to elective home education. The Chief Education Officer advised that a detailed report was included in the Committee's forward work programme. Home education was a parental choice which the Authority could not prevent unless there was a statement of special educational needs. Parents were always asked the reason for their choice however were not obliged to respond. Guidance and legislation in regard to monitoring were currently weak and the Authority had responded to WG's consultation asking for stronger guidance and monitoring arrangements. Parents do not have to follow the national curriculum or have any qualifications. More than 170 children and young people in the county were being educated at home and the trend was increasing.

Concerns were expressed at the increase in young people classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Chief Education Officer stated that schools were responsible for putting young people at risk on alternative courses and monitoring their progress. A Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) was used to flag up those at risk of becoming NEET and this was shared with the school. Youth services also worked with those at high risk. He agreed to report progress to the Committee later in the year. The Head of Learner Programmes added that he was working with the Lifelong Learning Networks Manager on a report about the 11 – 19 curriculum review. This would be presented to the Committee later in the year.

The distribution of the Young Carers' Charter to all schools and relevant settings was queried. The Head of Children's Services stated that an e-learning module for staff and pupils developed by Hywel Dda Health Board had been sent to all schools.

It was asked if schools had to pay for the new information management systems, SIMS and Teacher Centre, which had been introduced during the year. The Chief

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

Education Officer advised that this was not the case however schools could also decide locally to use another tracking system which did have an annual fee.

It was asked why the percentage of schools graded as "Good" or "Satisfactory" for school building condition was off target. The Chief Education Officer stated that 2 of the 4 schools that had closed during the year had been classed as in good condition which had affected the result.

A progress report was requested in relation to disposal of empty school buildings as there were concerns about them attracting anti-social behaviour. The Chief Education Officer agreed to request an update from the Head of Corporate Property including which buildings had been sold and the price achieved. He would then circulate this to the Committee.

The 2013 result of 93.7% pupils in Welsh-medium and bilingual primary schools transferring to Welsh-medium secondary schools was queried. The Chief Education Officer advised that this result did not include English-medium primary schools. The percentage was 55% across the entire primary sector.

The increase in compliments to the department was welcomed. The Chief Education Officer stated that the department had improved its logging of complimentary letters and messages.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2014/15

The Committee considered a report outlining the end of year financial position for the revenue and capital expenditure in relation to the remit of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee, in respect of the 2014/15 financial year. The revenue budget had a net underspend of £98k at the end of the year.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

The end of year revenue result was welcomed however it was noted that the budget monitoring results varied widely during the year. It was asked if anything was being done to strengthen the monitoring arrangements. The Chief Education Officer advised that budget managers were receiving annual training and work was being done to help managers with budget forecasting. The Group Accountant added that a number of contingencies were built into forecasts during the year due to the nature of the services and where there could be changing circumstances at short notice. Detailed monitoring was done on a bi-monthly basis.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. EXPLANATIONS FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2015

The Committee noted the reasons for the non-submissions of the Mid & West Wales Regional Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2014/15, as well as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub update.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the explanations for the non-submissions be noted.

10. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND REFERRALS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report detailing progress in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee was provided with a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting scheduled for the 24th September 2015. The Committee agreed to defer the School Attendance and Education Welfare Update report and School Visits Activity report 2014/15, given the length of the agenda.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items be endorsed, subject to the deferment of the School Attendance and Education Welfare Update report and School Visits Activity report 2014/15.

10. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 18th MAY 2015

It was noted that Councillor C.A. Campbell's declaration of interest in relation to minute 5 was that his brother and sister-in-law were teachers.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 18th May 2015, be signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment above.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____